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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - IBERO-AMERICAN SUMMIT AFTERMATH

¶1. Summary: The Chilean press continues to collect opinions among experts and international commentators about the impact of the clash between the King of Spain and Chavez. The overall consensus is that Chavez' primary goal is to disrupt relations among nations in the region to his own advantage and that the Venezuelan President is rude, offensive, and unwilling to comply with established rules. The commentators also agree that other leaders in the region should speak out against Chavez, but do not because they are afraid of the Venezuelan leader's influence and losing access to his cheap oil. Analysts also concur that Chavez has unquestionably hurt the region, by undermining future summits and dialogue. Others argue that that those countries that are working wholeheartedly to overcome underdevelopment, such as Chile, have no business dealing with individuals such as Chavez. End Summary.

¶2. On November 18, conservative, influential, newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (Sunday circ. 260,100) quoted Sergio Abrue, former Uruguay Foreign Minister: "What is significant here is that there is a head of state, such as Chavez, who tries to impose a model that creates division and conflict wherever he goes.... Chavez is incontrollable and does not respect any type of formality."

¶3. Inigo Saenz de Ugarte, Spanish daily Publico said: "Latin America has changed and someone should have warned the President of Chile that several countries, headed by Venezuela...use the media in these Summits to launch their aggressive messages. They are fighting an ideological war.... The government of Chile failed to foresee a situation that was bound to happen sooner or later...and it did not put a stop to Chavez' unruliness.... Bachelet was like a referee who let the game continue until she realized the players were breaking each others bones. She did not interfere, did not set the boundaries, and in the end was overtaken by events."

¶5. Carlos Figueroa (former state minister of Chile) said: "The summit incident has been blown out of proportion, because it involved the King of Spain, who showed he is as human as anyone else and becomes enraged with the Chavez and Ortega's nonsense.... I would respectfully advise the President (Bachelet) to keep a more distant official relationship with Chavez."

¶6. Milos Alcalay, former Venezuelan Ambassador to United Nations stated: "The Presidents (of the region) are too tolerant with Chavez.... They should tell Chavez -- paraphrasing the Spanish King -- to 'shut up.'"

¶7. An Opina survey on the King-Chavez incident at the Ibero-American summit revealed that: 45.3% graded President Bachelet's handling of the incident between 1 and 4 (D and F). Asked if Chile should oppose Chavez or remain neutral, 66.4% said

"neutral" and 21% said "oppose"; 39.2% said the King of Spain's reaction to Chavez had been "appropriate" and 39.7% said President Bachelet should have reprimanded Chavez.

¶8. On November 18, "El Mercurio" reported that discontent in Venezuela is growing and increasingly evident among the students who are demonstrating every day. Orlando Ochoa, PhD in economics from Oxford University, said that a 30% inflation rate, shortages of basic products, price controls, and a nearly one-third drop in oil production assures a bleak future for Venezuela. "Venezuela is the land of corruption, consumerism, black market, and shortages. That is the 21st century socialist revolution paid for by oil," stated Ochoa.

¶9. Ivan Carratu, former Venezuelan Military Attache to the United States, stated Chavez's primary goal is to destroy democratic institutions in other countries in the region. Carratu says that Venezuela's military association with Belorussia, Russia, Algeria, Cuba, China, North Korea, and Iran, and his decision to manufacture rifles can be understood in the limelight of Chavez' efforts to establish the South America Treaty Organization. He stated these associations are accompanied by efforts to influence other countries, primarily through Venezuela's Foreign Service, adding that Chavez will become uncontrollable once he acquires 800-kilometer range Scud missiles from North Korea.

Scathing Editorials

¶10. On November 18, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (Sunday circ. 222,084) carried a column by Ascanio Cavallo entitled, "Chavez Notices Chile." Quote:

"Chavez' purpose was to polarize the Summit, which is the same as destroying it. The Venezuela Commander does not feel comfortable with multilateralism where he has to be one more among his counterparts. He wants control. That is why he destroyed the Andean Community, has Mercosur in agony... and wants to replace the OAS. And now that we are familiar with Chavez' script -- unexpected arrivals, hostility against the hosts, taking over the limelight, attacks and insults, interfering in domestic issues -- Chavez has become a worrisome guest.... Chavez is pushing the continent toward a division of two blocks and has had as much progress as setbacks.... It is not clear if the President's diplomacy and multilateralism will be able to resist the pressure. The first test will be in six months at the European and Latin American Summit in Lima. After what happened in Santiago, all foreign ministries will be wondering whether the King of Spain and Zapatero will be willing to attend the same plenary with Chavez or furthermore, whether the Europeans in general will want to."

¶17. On November 18, "La Tercera" also carried a column by Mario Vargas Llosa entitled "The Commander and the King." Quote:

"The incident at the Ibero-American summit says more about Venezuela's strong man, of the ties between Latin America and Spain, than dozens of essays.... The most obvious lesson from this psychodrama is that there still is an outdated, barbarian, ignorant and demagogic Latin America and that these meetings are a waste of time and money for those democratic and modern societies that aspire to create an Ibero-American Summit. This aspiration is impossible while there are Latin American countries that have rulers such as Chavez, Ortega or Evo Morales, not to mention Fidel Castro.... The fact that individuals such as them were freely elected to office denotes the political ignorance and democratic fragility (of our societies)....

Of course there is another more decent, honest, democratic, and hard-working Latin America. It was present at the Summit, invisible and mute.... They often keep quite because they are afraid of becoming victims of the violence and insults of these bullies, who can also instigate domestic radical groups.... Why are they quiet... if they are infinitely more respectable and deserving of being heard? It is not only because some are bribed by the petrodollars that Venezuela disburses....

Are there other lessons from which to learn? It is more convenient for democratic countries such as Spain to prioritize establishing

ties with countries that stand for civility, legality, and freedom that can assure long-term cooperation, rather than maintaining ties with those that represent the antithesis of what Spain is today. Neither Cuba nor Venezuela deserves to be Spain's friends.... It is possible that the King violated protocol. But he brought much happiness to many Latin Americans and millions of Venezuelans. The proof is that I have written this column listening to the new dance and song that is now playing in Venezuelan colleges entitled, 'Why don't you shut up.'

URBAN